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Sustainable development: follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 69/216, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-first session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report considers a range of activities undertaken at the national and regional level to advance the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea as well as the possible legal and financial implications of designating the Caribbean Sea a special area within the context of sustainable development. Inputs from Member States, United Nations entities, and relevant regional organizations have been incorporated. A report of the Association of Caribbean States on progress made in the implementation of the resolution is contained in the annex.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/216, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations", the General Assembly recognized that the Caribbean Sea is an area of unique biodiversity and a highly fragile ecosystem that requires relevant regional and international development partners to work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources.

2. The General Assembly also invited the Association of Caribbean States to submit to the Secretary-General a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution, for consideration by the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

3. The present report is based on inputs from the United Nations system, relevant regional organizations and Member States.[1] The report of the Association of Caribbean States is contained in the annex to this report.

II. Possible legal and financial implications of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development

4. By calling for designation as a "special area within the context of sustainable development", Caribbean Member States are seeking to establish a new concept, but the legal and financial implications have not been elaborated to date. Caribbean Member States first made the call in 1997 at a Caribbean ministerial meeting on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and since then, the international community has continued to consider the particular characteristics of the Caribbean Sea that might justify this type of designation.

5. As is noted in the report annexed hereto, in 2014 a consultancy was mandated by the Fifth Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Association of Caribbean States and the General Assembly to examine the implications of Special Area status.

6. The consultancy examined the various ways in which "Special Area" is treated under legal instruments such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the resolution of the International Maritime Organization on particularly sensitive sea areas. In the examination, it was concluded that the Caribbean Sea has the characteristics of a Special Area, in terms of the ecological, socioeconomic and scientific value which it presents to the people of the Caribbean. It was noted that, while the Caribbean Sea is worthy of Special Area status, the concepts of sustainable development have evolved significantly, and thus a consideration of

[1] Inputs were received from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Australia, the Caribbean Community secretariat and the Association of Caribbean States.

Special Area status must also take into account broader issues of sustainable tourism, trade and poverty.

7. The consultancy also examined the question of "ocean governance", and it was concluded that there is no one fixed definition of it. Consequently, it was suggested that Member States should develop a working definition rather than establish an overarching legal definition. It was noted that the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea should focus on having a coordinated management approach using existing legal instruments. More information is in the annex.

III. Activities undertaken at the national and regional levels

A. Land-based and marine-based sources of pollution

8. The Caribbean Sea region is being endangered by pollution from sources that are based both on the land and in the sea. In this regard, the secretariat of the Caribbean Environment Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has actively promoted accession/ratification of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) of 1983 and continued to place special emphasis on activities for the promotion of the implementation of the obligations under the Protocol at national and regional levels. The Protocol entered into force in August 2010 and to date 12 countries have ratified it, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

9. In support of the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, the Caribbean Environment Programme has also supported the establishment of three subregional nodes or platforms for improving the management of marine litter, nutrients and sewage.

10. Developing national and regional plans to reduce pollution is also key. The Caribbean Environment Programme continues to work with countries of the wider Caribbean region to develop and/or update national programmes of action for the control, prevention and reduction of pollution from land-based sources and activities.

11. During the "Our Ocean" Conference held in Chile in 2015, the Caribbean Environment Programme secretariat, together with the Governments of Panama and Jamaica and the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America, announced a new Trash Free Partnership International which will focus on community-based activities in collaboration with the United States Peace Corps to reduce the impact of marine litter on coastal and marine ecosystems, human health and livelihoods. The project is being initially piloted in Jamaica and Panama but is expected to expand to the rest of the wider Caribbean region. This will assist in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Wider Caribbean Region developed in 2008 and updated in 2015.

12. Wastewater management continues to be a priority for the Caribbean region. The Caribbean Environment Programme works on this issue through the implementation of the project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF),

entitled "Testing a prototype Caribbean regional fund for wastewater management". That project aims to improve the capacity for wastewater management in countries of the wider Caribbean region through sustainable financing for wastewater management projects while also addressing key capacity constraints. The five-year project ends in December 2016 and has benefited 13 participating countries.

13. Finally, UNEP built collaborative efforts between the secretariat of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife to the Cartagena Convention, the related Regional Activity Centre and the secretariat of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention) towards raising awareness on the massive influx of Sargassum observed since 2014. The Caribbean Environment Programme and the Regional Activity Centre have been facilitating the diffusion of information on the Sargassum influx by hosting an online platform to share experiences and knowledge on this phenomenon within the Caribbean region and West Africa. At the United Nations Environment Assembly in 2016, a special session was organized on this issue in collaboration with the UNEP Global Programme of Action.

B. Coastal and marine resources management

14. The large marine ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea is a complex and vital shared resource of the countries of the Caribbean region, and Governments and international and regional organizations implemented a number of projects and programmes to safeguard it in the last biennium. Linkages for enhanced collaboration have been established with regional fisheries organizations (Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization) under the regional GEF/UNDP project entitled "Catalysing implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems". This will include development of a formal agreement between the Government of Brazil and the Cartagena Convention secretariat to facilitate participation of Brazil in wider Caribbean activities under that project.

15. The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network — Caribbean has been reactivated to improve and streamline information, data management and reporting on the status of corals in the region. A regional workshop was held in April 2016 at the Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory, Jamaica, with the participation of 35 coral reef scientists and coastal managers from several countries to increase capacity for effective integrated coral reef monitoring and improve standardized and strategic reporting at the regional level.

16. In support of marine protected areas as a tool to conserve biodiversity, enhance fisheries and achieve other management goals, the Caribbean Environment Programme's Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers Network and Forum continued to support marine protected areas in the region. It brings together managers, researchers, administrators, educators and scientists as well as the private sector in an inclusive network to exchange ideas and lessons learned. Under the partnership with the "Climate resilient eastern Caribbean marine managed areas network" project, funded by the Government of Germany and led by the Nature

Conservancy, grants, technical assistance and financial resources (€155,000 per country) for marine protected areas in six eastern Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) have been provided.

17. With a view to enhancing integrated sustainable use of coastal and marine resources, the project entitled "Biodiversity for sustainable development in the Caribbean through ecosystem-based management" was established in 2015 with funding from the Directorate for the Environment within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy. Its overall objective is to enhance the livelihood of the populations of the region by contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of coastal and marine biodiversity through the application of the ecosystem-based management approach.

18. The Caribbean Environment Programme continues to work closely with its associated Regional Activity Centre for specially protected areas and wildlife, hosted by the Government of France in Guadeloupe. In keeping with the provisions of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife, work is ongoing for the cooperation programme developed among the protected areas listed under the Protocol in 2012. Thirteen additional protected areas were listed by parties at the Eighth Meeting of the Contracting Parties in December 2014.

19. There has been further implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region through science-based sister sanctuary relationships which have been forged among five States or their territories — Bermuda, Caribbean Netherlands, Dominican Republic, French Antilles and United States — to protect the migratory North Atlantic humpback whale. A sister sanctuary agreement with Yarari, the Caribbean Netherlands sanctuary, is anticipated later in 2016. The management plan for the Marine Mammal Sanctuary of the Dominican Republic was completed in 2015 with support from the Government of Spain.

20. Human activities in coastal areas, coastal erosion, loss of natural habitat and ecosystems, marine pollution and effluents have affected coral reefs and marine habitats in the Caribbean. The Australian Direct Aid Program has assisted communities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to implement sustainable development programmes affected by those factors.

21. In 2015, organizations in Belize, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines participated in a reef guardians programme modelled on the Great Barrier Reef Guardians framework in Australia. The programme engaged users of the reefs — tour operators, farmers, mechanics and students — to educate them on the benefits of protecting the reefs through proper use and respect for the environment and the dangers involved in its neglect.

22. Adapting to climate change is also important for the Caribbean Sea region. As part of the regional programme in Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the project entitled "Establishing the Caribbean observing network for ocean acidification and its impact on harmful algal blooms, using nuclear and isotopic techniques" is being implemented as an initial step towards achieving the overall objective of adopting and implementing programmes of mitigation and adaptation to climate change in the Member States of the Caribbean Sea region.

23. As a continuation of this project, IAEA will implement from 2017 to 2019 the project entitled "Strengthening regional monitoring and response for sustainable marine and coastal environments", which focuses on raising awareness of the results of the previous project and has the ultimate goal of improving the marine environment management of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean through actionable information provided by the network for monitoring and response.

24. Moreover, the 25 parties to the Cartagena Convention, at the Sixteenth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties, held in December 2014, adopted the work plan and budget for 2015-2016 for the Programme. The work plan and accompanying decisions adopted by the Meeting focus on addressing integrated watershed and coastal zone management in small island developing States; prevention and reduction of pollution by oil spills, ballast water, marine litter/solid waste, sewage and nutrients; strengthening marine protected areas; ecosystem-based management for coastal and marine activities; conservation of marine mammal corridors; information-sharing on the Sargassum seaweed influx; and enhancing regional coordination for the improved governance and sustainable management of living marine resources in the wider Caribbean region.

25. The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission was established in 1973 by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and currently comprises 33 countries and the European Union as members. Almost all Caribbean and Central American countries are members of the Commission.[2] The Commission's objective is to promote the conservation, management and development of living marine resources in the Commission's area of operation, in line with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and to address common fisheries management and development problems faced by Commission members.

26. In the period from 2014 to 2016, 31 members of the Commission participated in its activities. Eight of the 10 joint Working Groups (queen conch, spawning aggregations, fish aggregating devices, spiny lobster, recreational fisheries, flying fish, shrimp and groundfish, deep sea fisheries) have been active. Sixteen Working Group meetings and technical workshops were organized by the Commission, often in collaboration with partners, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization, the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem project and the Caribbean Fishery Management Council of the United States.

27. On 27 January 2016 the secretariats of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the three regional fishery bodies to increase the sustainability of fisheries.

[2] Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and European Union.

The memorandum of understanding establishes the interim coordination mechanism for sustainable fisheries in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf area, contributes to implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the area and is coordinated by the secretariat of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission.

28. The sixteenth session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, hosted by the Government of France in Guadeloupe from 20 to 24 June 2016 and attended by 28 member countries, reached an important milestone for regional fisheries management in the wider Caribbean region. The Commission agreed to launch a process to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization in the Commission's mandate area and to collaborate in fisheries management and conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction of straddling stocks, deep sea fish stocks and highly migratory species that are not under the mandate of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

29. At the sixteenth session, the Commission followed similar decisions by its neighbouring fisheries commissions, such as the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization and the North-east Atlantic Fisheries Commission, and assigned the status of vulnerable marine ecosystem to various seamounts in the deep sea of the high seas part of the Commission's mandate area. The seamounts concerned are Corner Seamounts, New England Seamounts, Wyoming Seamounts and Congress and Lynch Seamounts. The Mid-Atlantic Ridge hydrothermal vents were assigned the same status, which means that they are closed for bottom fisheries until detailed survey work and assessments are carried out. This precautionary measure taken by the Commission involves an area comparable to the size of Guyana.

30. The Commission also adopted the Regional Plan for Queen Conch Management and Conservation in the Commission's area, the subregional fisheries management plan for flying fish in the eastern Caribbean and specific regionally agreed spiny lobster fisheries management measures. These plans and management measures were developed together with the partner organizations (see para. 26). The implementation of the regional plans and measures by the members of the Commission has started.

31. A number of initiatives have also been carried out by States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and CARICOM regional institutions to contribute to the efforts to ensure the sustainable management of the resources of the Caribbean Sea. Activities carried out by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism include:

(a) Adoption in 2015 of the St. George's Declaration on Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster;

(b) Adoption of a subregional fisheries management plan for flying fish in the eastern Caribbean;

(c) Adoption of a five-year plan of action to promote aquaculture in the CARICOM subregion as a means of ensuring sustainable use of commercial fisheries;

(d) Development of management performance reports for agreed regional management instruments intended to improve management of the most important commercial pelagic fisheries in the eastern Caribbean;

(e) Development of model fishery sanitary measures legislation and supporting regulations, protocols and guidelines, and assessment of fisheries environmental monitoring programmes related to sanitary standards for fish and seafood;

(f) Provision of support for training and capacity-building initiatives for government fisheries personnel in a range of areas of fisheries management such as management of fish companies and marketing, stock assessment, ocean governance (policy, law and management), data management, ecosystem modelling, and management of fishery sanitary measures.

32. Involving the academic sector is also important. For instance, the University of the West Indies has done research on the project entitled "Future of reefs in a changing environment 2010-2015"; the impacts and management of invasive species, primarily lionfish; the social and economic monitoring of fishing communities and marine protected areas; the impacts of coral bleaching on reefs; and marine spatial planning for coral reef areas.

33. Blue Week 2016: The International Conference to Promote Blue Growth and Investment, was held in St. George's, Grenada, from 14 to 22 May 2016, hosted by the Government of Grenada; it shed light on the opportunities that can be derived from the region's ocean resources.

34. Finally, regenerating fish population is important for the Caribbean Sea region. In that connection, a no-fish zone, the Oracabessa Fish Sanctuary on Jamaica's north coast, was enhanced with funding from the Australian Direct Aid Program to reduce the incidence of illegal entry into the protected area. The zone, which prohibits fishing of any kind, will over time regenerate the fish population. Excess stocks of fish will spill over outside the sanctuary's boundaries, providing increased catch and improved livelihoods for fishermen. In 2015, funding provided the foundation for increased enforcement capacity of the sanctuary with the purchase of demarcation buoys, military grade flash lights and life jackets.

C. Land, housing and human settlements

35. The Caribbean is a highly urbanized region in the world, with 70.4 per cent of its population living in urban settlements — a proportion almost twice as high as those for Africa and Asia. However, most Caribbean cities have low-density urbanization and are sprawling, so that in various places it is hard to differentiate between urban and rural population densities. Other challenges include insufficient infrastructure networks, poor mobility systems, high competition for land use, urban primacy, high concentration of the population in coastal zones and limited human resources and capacity, which are hindering sustainable growth and development in the Caribbean region. The Caribbean region is thus shaped by the reality of coastal zone urbanization, which puts additional stress on the environment by increasing the amount of impermeable surfaces and the demands on urban solid waste and wastewater management. In that context, the existence of organizations such the Caribbean Network for Urban and Land Management and the Caribbean Evaluators International, which are now holding Caribbean Urban Forums each year, is more than welcome.

36. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has been working together with the European Commission and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States to strengthen local, central and regional capacity through a participatory slum upgrading programme. Five countries of the Caribbean are now part of this programme, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. The programme puts slums on the urban map and encourages the necessary policy changes, budget allocations and multi-stakeholder partnerships for the sustainable improvement of living conditions for slum dwellers.

37. In the seven eastern Caribbean States, UN-Habitat has implemented, with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the University of the West Indies, a project for enhancing regional and national institutions to develop effective land policies. The project has been highly satisfactory in achieving the following accomplishments: (a) formulation and adoption of land policy guidelines encompassing principles of equity, efficiency and sustainability; (b) national land policies and implementation tools approved in Member States based on the OECS land policy guidelines adapted to national conditions; (c) piloting in a few countries of the social tenure domain model (a pro-poor land rights recording system) in collaboration with local agencies involved in land records.

38. In Haiti, for example, all the efforts in the past few years have been put into supporting local governance in terms of planning of urban settlements (in formal and informal neighbourhoods), putting emphasis on sustainable housing and public spaces, as well as setting up new urban information systems. In the years to come, UN-Habitat will focus on advocating and contributing to the formulation and operationalization of national and local policies for sustainable urban development and housing.

39. In Cuba, UN-Habitat has been supporting the transformation of the housing sector. The programme, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, has supported the Government of Cuba and the communities in preparing a national housing profile. This profile is being considered as the first step to inform and engage policymakers and decision makers, and provide them with the evidence needed to design their choices and support critical decisions for the future. The following topics have been taken into account: institutional framework; housing needs and demand; housing supply; legal and regulatory frameworks; urban land supply for housing; basic infrastructure provision for housing; building materials; construction industry and employment in the housing sector; and housing finance.

D. Social and economic development

40. The social and economic development of the Caribbean Sea region is closely related to security issues. In this regard, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the UNODC Regional Programme in Support of the CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy and the memorandum of understanding was signed by UNODC and the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security in 2014.

41. In August 2015, UNODC re-established its presence in the region through the UNODC Programme Office for the Caribbean in Bridgetown, Barbados. UNODC is currently providing assistance to the Caribbean countries in the areas of prevention

of corruption/money laundering, border control and action against illicit trafficking (drugs, counterfeit goods, undeclared money, protected flora and fauna), and drug demand reduction.

42. Addressing transnational organized crime is crucial for the economic and social development of the Caribbean Sea region. UNODC, through its Global Container Control Programme, is supporting trade facilitation and border security by introducing countermeasures to address transnational organized crime and contraband trafficking by sea through the region. The initiative is delivering sophisticated risk assessment and targeting procedures to upgrade the professional skills and inter-agency cooperation of participating authorities in the Caribbean region. The container ports of the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname are already operational and have achieved significant results from participation in this global network, while Cuba will come online in 2016.

43. The Global Container Control Programme has a global reach and aims at fortifying the structures and processes which allow for the application of sustainable laws for States and selected ports, so as to minimize the exploitation of maritime containers for the illicit trafficking of drugs and other transnational organized crime activities. It also aims at strengthening and promoting the alliances between the customs, trade and enforcement communities to prevent the abuse of legitimate commercial trade for illicit activities while simultaneously making an effort to eradicate inter-institutional mistrust and corruption.

44. Anti-trafficking initiatives are also vital for the development of the region. The Airport Communication Programme (AIRCOP) is a multi-agency, anti-trafficking initiative, funded by the European Union, which strengthens detection, interdiction and the investigative capacities of participating airports in illicit drug source and transit countries. The overall objective is to disrupt the illegal networks that are disseminating drugs and other illicit products through smarter, more effective, well-connected, intelligence-led counter-narcotic activities.

45. In the CARICOM region, AIRCOP is being implemented in Barbados, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. In the Dominican Republic, joint interagency task forces have been established at the international airports of Santo Domingo and Punta Cana; in Jamaica, joint interagency task forces at the international airports of Montego Bay and Kingston became operational in April 2016; while in Barbados a unit is currently being equipped at the Grantley Adams International Airport.

46. During 2015, significant support was provided by UNODC in the creation of a regional framework for the return and sharing of recovered assets (CARICOM Agreement for the Sharing or Return of Recovered Assets). The Agreement is expected to be signed by the Caribbean Member States in 2016.

47. Crucially, families are important for the economic and social development of the region. It is recognized that families are the strongest protective factors in the lives of children and young adolescents, and are used as the social structure to prevent drug use, substance abuse and other risky behaviours, particularly violence. UNODC through its global programme on drug prevention has been supporting the adaptation and piloting of evidence-based family skills training programmes in Central America and the Caribbean, South America, Central and West Asia, South-East Europe and East Africa. The family skills training programme is being piloted in Central America and the Caribbean in coordination with the UNODC Regional

Office in Panama. The programme of concern is an adaptation of the Strengthening Families Program, a strong evidence-based programme designed in the United States for families with children aged 10 to 14 years.

48. Under the global programme on drug prevention, UNODC has been disseminating the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention, which it developed with the assistance of a globally representative group of more than 60 researchers, policymakers and practitioners and which were presented to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2013. Building on the Standards, UNODC has also launched the Prevention Strategy and Policymakers initiative, undertaken jointly with Italy, which aims to disseminate the Standards and support policymakers in planning a national drug prevention system that is health centred and based on scientific evidence.

E. Human capacity development

49. In addition to the training activities outlined above, agencies and organizations have held a number of national and regional workshops and training courses to build human capacity.

50. The development by the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme of new technical reports, infographics and fact sheets, the enhanced use of social media and targeted training for media professionals has facilitated greater knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising among the general public and other interested persons on coastal and marine issues, including on emerging issues such as ocean acidification, impacts of Sargassum and the negative environmental and human health impacts of microplastics.

51. The Caribbean Environment Programme continues to serve as an information hub for its member States and territories and has continued to update its website information on environmental news, the laboratory capacity database for the region, a children's corner, a member country information page, a media room, meeting pages and an online calendar. The Programme continues to promote, organize and participate in several commemorative activities to mark significant environmental days, in particular World Environment Day, the International Day for Biological Diversity, World Water Day and World Oceans Day.

52. Since the last report (A/69/314), the Caribbean Environment Programme has increased its reach across the regions and internationally by over 500 per cent through the social media sites Facebook and Twitter. Newly developed outreach products include new infographics, technical publications, regular press releases and news articles, as well as participation in regional and international events and activities to promote environmental protection and the sustainable development of the marine environment and to promote the ratification of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

53. Through the GEF Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management project, which ends in December 2016, the Caribbean Environment Programme has provided training to over 600 persons in wastewater management including on selection of wastewater treatment technologies, facilitation, water and wastewater management, governance and sanitation. This was done in collaboration with several agencies including the Caribbean Development Bank, the Caribbean Water

and Sewerage Association, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Global Water Partnership Caribbean and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

54. The Caribbean Environment Programme has, through the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife to the Cartagena Convention, continued to support national efforts to strengthen management of marine protected areas through regional and local training and exchanges among such areas in order to disseminate better practices through information-sharing, by means of its Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network and Forum and its regional database on marine protected areas, the most comprehensive of its kind with over 300 Caribbean marine protected areas listed. In 2015 a regional two-week training programme on marine protected areas was held in Grenada in collaboration with the BIOPAMA (Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management) Programme of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

55. In 2015, fishery and reef professionals from Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were recipients of fellowships awarded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.

56. The anti-corruption adviser programme is carried out as a technical assistance activity offered by UNODC to Member States to assist in developing their strategies and building their capacity to successfully implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

57. As the region moves forward in safeguarding the Caribbean Sea as a special area for sustainable development, a number of crucial areas for technical cooperation and assistance have been prioritized. These include:

(a) The establishment of tools and the enhancement of capacities to enable small island developing States members of CARICOM to evaluate the technical, financial, social, economic and environmental aspects/requirements related to accession, ratification and implementation of the various multilateral environmental agreements and related instruments of significance to the Caribbean Sea;

(b) Capacity-building support for strengthening the scientific approaches to management of regional fisheries resources, including Caribbean queen conch;

(c) Establishment of a programme of assistance for conducting a valuation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors;

(d) Development of data and statistics for the fisheries sector;

(e) Assistance to facilitate training and capacity-building on oceans governance, including the development of the region's ocean-forecasting capability.

58. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs continues to implement the Development Account project. The project focuses on strengthening the capacity of small island developing States to assess progress in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy to mitigate risks and reduce vulnerability. Subregional workshops were held in Bridgetown for the three Caribbean piloting countries (Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Lucia) from 7 to 9 October 2015. The project is ongoing with a focus on developing a vulnerability-resilience country profile for each pilot country.

IV. Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission

59. Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission are fully described in the annex. Among the key activities were the 14th meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission, held on 24 November 2014 and the 15th meeting of the Commission held on 1 October 2015.

60. The First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission, on the theme "Challenges, dialogue, and cooperation towards the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea", was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 23 and 24 November 2015. The Symposium welcomed a wide range of experts from 18 States members of the Association of Caribbean States and 23 regional organizations and institutions, totalling 113 participants on the first day and 98 participants on the second day.

61. On 6 May 2016, the 1st meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held at the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States. On 13 May 2016, the 1st meeting of the Legal Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held, also at the Association secretariat.

62. The Caribbean Sea Commission developed a databank to improve the management of specific emerging critical issues relating to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea, through the sharing of management experiences, and project research data. Further, the databank aspires to improve the communication of information relevant to Caribbean Sea policy among Member States.

V. Conclusion

63. Member States in the wider Caribbean region have continued in this biennium to work collaboratively on behalf of their shared resource, the Caribbean Sea. They have been supported in their efforts by the international community, including partner Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Their efforts address economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and often include capacity-building components. In addition, the ecosystem-based approach has been adopted in many cases.

64. The Association of Caribbean States, through the Caribbean Sea Commission, remains committed to the goal of attaining Special Area status for the Caribbean Sea. Through its recent revitalization, the Commission is actively pursuing the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea by means of activities such as joint research, management projects, meetings and information-sharing mechanisms, with the aim of improving coordination and cooperation in marine environmental management issues and the requisite decision-making.

Annex

Progress made in the implementation of resolution 69/216

Report of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States

Introduction

1. The Caribbean Sea is a fragile and complex marine area that is shared by several countries of varying sizes and stages of economic development and upon which the populations of those countries depend for their social, economic, cultural, climatic, aesthetic and other benefits. Therefore in order to facilitate the sustainable management and development of the Caribbean Sea it is prudent to utilize a network structure throughout the wider Caribbean region that is able to coordinate the myriad projects and policies that relate to the Caribbean Sea.

2. In this regard, the Caribbean Sea Commission has been identified as the mechanism that can be utilized to accomplish this goal through the establishment and maintenance of a technical and policy-oriented network comprising all the countries of the Association of Caribbean States and organizations that conduct activity that relates in any way to the Caribbean Sea. The rationale of this initiative is to facilitate the coordination and exchange of experiences among member States with regard to their policies and activities, in order to strengthen existing mechanisms by promoting synergies and inter-institutional cooperation while respecting the mandate of each State or organization.

3. This report outlines the activities of the Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission as they relate to General Assembly resolution 69/216, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations".

The Caribbean Sea Commission and its Sub-Commissions

4. Building on the substantive groundwork of Barbados as the Chair of the Caribbean Sea Commission, the Commission has undergone a period of revitalization during the years 2014 to 2016. This revitalization has begun the process of establishing the Commission as the primary mechanism for coordination and cooperation in activities that promote the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. The main activities and actions completed in the period in pursuit of this goal are outlined in the present report; they are:

- The Board meetings of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the meetings of the States members of the Commission.
- International support for the Commission.
- The results of the consultancy on the legal, economic and financial implications of attaining "Special Area" status.
- The First Symposium of the Commission.
- The convening of the Sub-Commissions of the Commission: the Legal Sub-Commission and the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission.

- The Commission's databank.
- The future activities of the Commission.

Meeting of the Board of the Caribbean Sea Commission and meetings of the States members of the Commission

5. The 14th meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held on 24 November 2014, chaired by Costa Rica. The meeting discussed the transition of responsibilities to the new Chair of the Board, Costa Rica, the concept of the Commission Symposium, and the consultancy on the legal implications of Special Area status.

6. In March 2015 the Chairmanship of Costa Rica came to an end and the Dominican Republic was elected as the new Chair, with Barbados and Nicaragua providing support as the Vice-Chairs of the Commission.

7. In September 2015, at the 3rd meeting of the Board of the Caribbean Sea Commission, it was decided that the Commission would contract a programme coordinator, to coordinate the activities at the secretariat for the advancement of the goals of the Commission. Following advertisement and internal selection, a coordinator was recruited for a period of two years, starting on 15 November 2015.

8. The 15th meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held on 1 October 2015. That meeting discussed and finalized the topics of discussion and the format of the First Symposium of the Commission, which was held in November 2015.

9. At the XXI Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council, in January 2016, there was agreement to reinvigorate the Sub-Commissions in order to strengthen the institutionalization process, and member States were asked to nominate individuals to be members of the Sub-Commissions.

International support for the Caribbean Sea Commission

10. Turkey, an Association of Caribbean States observer State, continues to provide generous support to the work of the Commission. Between September 2014 and June 2016 the Commission has received $220,000.00 in financial support from Turkey. A total amount of $100,000.00 was received in 2015 and another $120,000.00 was received in June 2016.

Consultancy of the Caribbean Sea Commission

11. The consultancy was a response to mandates given by the Fifth Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Association of Caribbean States and the United Nations General Assembly to examine the implications of Special Area status. In June 2014 the consultant, Judy Daniel, was contracted to complete a report entitled "Legal, financial, and economic implications of attaining "Special Area" status for the Caribbean Sea". The consultancy was completed in October 2014 and circulated to member States and observers in November 2014 for their consideration and comments. Judy Daniel presented her consultancy report at the 15th meeting of the Commission.

12 The consultancy examined the various ways in which "Special Area" is treated under legal instruments such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the resolution of the International Maritime Organization on particularly sensitive sea

areas. In the examination, it was concluded that the Caribbean Sea has the characteristics of a Special Area, in terms of the ecological, socioeconomic and scientific value which it presents to the people of the Caribbean. It was noted that while the Caribbean Sea is worthy of Special Area status, the concepts of sustainable development have evolved significantly, and thus a consideration of Special Area status must also take into account broader issues of sustainable tourism, trade and poverty.

13. The consultancy also examined the question of "ocean governance", and it was concluded that there is no one fixed definition of it. Consequently, it was suggested that member States should develop a working definition rather than establish an overarching legal definition. It was noted that the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea should focus on having a coordinated management approach using existing legal instruments.

14. The consultancy report was also presented by Judy Daniel to the Legal Sub-Commission of the Commission at its 1st meeting, which was held in May 2016. The conclusions of the Sub-Commission, and next steps related to the concept of Special Area, are detailed below (paras. 22-23).

Caribbean Sea Commission Symposium

15. The First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission, on the theme "Challenges, dialogue, and cooperation towards the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea", was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 23 and 24 November 2015. The Symposium welcomed a wide range of experts from 18 States members of the Association of Caribbean States and 23 regional organizations and institutions, totalling 113 participants on the first day and 98 participants on the second day. The opening ceremony featured remarks from Frances Seignoret, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago; the Chair of the Ministerial Council, Lener Renauld, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti; the Chair of the Caribbean Sea Commission, Andrés Navarro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic; Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States; and Dale Webber, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies of the University of the West Indies.

16. The Symposium had sessions which focused on the topics "Facing the threat of the Sargassum seaweed", "Erosion of coastal zones and mitigation alternatives" and "Invasive species, the lionfish: current situation" with presentations by experts from Barbados, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica and Mexico.

17. The event was fruitful and resulted in the Communiqué of the First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission, which highlighted the following results:

- The participants presented in a detailed and systematic manner on the uncontrolled increase of the invasive species the lionfish and Sargassum seaweed and the erosion of the coasts of the Caribbean Sea and the serious and negative impacts of these on the people, the territory and the economy of the greater Caribbean. Furthermore, they highlighted the intimate relationship between these phenomena and the deterioration of the coral reefs.
- The experts recommended to the Governments of the States members and associate members of the Association of Caribbean States to strengthen the

mechanisms of coordination and centralization of actions, in order to address the serious problems that have adversely affected the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea.

- Additionally, it was suggested that the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States be assigned the mission of acting as a coordinating mechanism, to facilitate the cooperation among the nations of the greater Caribbean. In this regard, the secretariat of the Association considered the coordination among the subregional organizations of integration to be of vital importance and welcomed with enthusiasm the proposal of the representative of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States to work with the Association.

- The participants considered it essential to seek international financing to drive a wider investigation on the topics of the Symposium and that actions be taken on behalf of the Governments in order to establish mechanisms to centralize and disseminate scientific information which will be gathered. In this regard, the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States conveyed its intention to develop a databank to help with this function.

- The participants underscored the importance of using the Commission as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge provided by the scientific community with respect to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea to the political decision makers of the States members and associate members of the Association of Caribbean States.

- The representative of France proposed to develop a project in relation to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea as well as convene a conference on the Caribbean Sea in Guadeloupe in 2016; the project will be presented to the Association secretariat in the coming months. The secretariat expressed its gratitude for the proposal of collaboration with the Government of France.

- The secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission will report to the next Ministerial Council of the Association the recommendations outlined in this document, with the hope to eventually include those that are considered priority and achievable in the Association's 2016-2017 plan of action, to be presented at the seventh summit of the Heads of State in Havana in 2016.

First meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission

18. On 6 May 2016, the 1st meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held at the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States. The meeting was attended by five Sub-Commission members: Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala and Mexico, who were nominated by their respective member States. The Dominican Republic, the Chair of the Caribbean Sea Commission, also attended the meeting and was represented by Ambassador José Serulle Ramia.

19. The meeting addressed the implementation of the databank of the Caribbean Sea Commission in detail, and defined its dual objective as (i) an information source for the environmental management practitioners of member States and (ii) an information-gathering mechanism for the Association of Caribbean States and its decision-making

bodies. The features of the databank and the method of data collection were also discussed, and these are discussed in more detail below (paras. 24-28).

20. The meeting also discussed the two collaborative projects presented by Cuba on the topics of coastal erosion and coral reefs. These projects represent the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of the Commission and the consultancy, namely to pursue the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea through joint projects among States members of the Association of Caribbean States.

21. Finally, the meeting clearly articulated the role of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission as a technical advisory body to the high-level decision-making bodies of the States members of the Association of Caribbean States. The members of the Sub-Commission clarified that the Sub-Commission can be used to communicate available technical knowledge, especially that collected through the databank, into recommendations for the use of policymakers.

First meeting of the Legal Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission

22. On 13 May 2016, the 1st meeting of the Legal Sub-Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held at the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States. The meeting was attended by four Sub-Commission members: Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Nicaragua, who were nominated by their respective member States. The Dominican Republic, the Chair of the Caribbean Sea Commission, also attended the meeting and was represented by Ambassador José Serulle Ramia.

23. The meeting discussions were centred on articulating the way forward for the attainment of Special Area status, and the reporting of progress to the United Nations. Following a presentation by consultant Judy Daniel, the members deliberated on the concept and definition of "Special Area". The Sub-Commission agreed that the Commission should move forward with a working concept of Special Area, instead of having a fixed definition.

Databank of the Caribbean Sea Commission

24. The databank of the Caribbean Sea Commission aims to improve the management of specific emerging critical issues related to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea, through the sharing of management experiences, and project research data. Further, the databank aspires to improve the communication of information relevant to Caribbean Sea policy among member States.

25. Specifically, the databank will have three key features:

- An online database of national and regional projects related to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea.
- A database of best practice guides and case studies of management responses.
- A database of regional experts to address emerging topics/specific critical issues.

26. The databank of the Caribbean Sea Commission will be a user-driven centralized space for the sharing of critical information for the management of Caribbean Sea sustainability issues. The system aspires to enable the provision of policy-relevant science and information to the individuals who make national

environmental policy. Furthermore, by identifying effective management options, the system enables their replication by nation States and the generation of synergistic regional policy.

27. In the first instance, the databank will focus on gathering information related to the prediction, monitoring and management of the Sargassum seaweed inundation faced by the Caribbean. Information on projects, experts and national response efforts will be centralized in the databank, and be used for the development of a regional best practice guide targeted at high-level policymakers. The regional best practice guide will focus on identifying the most effective management efforts as well as opportunities for shared regional policy.

28. The Commission hopes to launch the databank by the end of 2016.

Future activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission

Proposed project on coastal erosion and coral reefs

29. At the 1st meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission of the Commission, José Luis Juanes Marti, representing the Government of Cuba, presented two projects to be adopted by the Association of Caribbean States: one on the preservation of coral reefs, and the other on the management and monitoring of coastal erosion. The Association secretariat is currently seeking funding for these two projects, with the hope of beginning implementation in the second half of 2016.

Second Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission

30. At the 8th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States, held in Havana on 3 June 2016, Andrés Navarro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, offered to host the Second Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission. The details for the Symposium have to be finalized, and the secretariat anticipates that, like the First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission, the Symposium will be a success.

Conclusion

31. The Association of Caribbean States, through the Caribbean Sea Commission, remains committed to the goal of attaining Special Area status for the Caribbean Sea. Through its recent revitalization, the Commission is actively pursuing the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea by means of activities such as joint research, management projects, meetings and information-sharing mechanisms, with the aim of improving the coordination and cooperation of marine environmental management issues and its requisite decision-making. The Association of Caribbean States is grateful for the consideration of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General in this matter.